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ABSTRACT

A statement of policy was developed by the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Missouri Library Association as a means of carrying out its assigned responsibility "to make available such assistance and direction as deemed necessary and proper to any citizen of Missouri involved in a censorship incident." The Association is directly concerned with the freedom of all members of a democratic society to read what they will in the course of making the social, educational, and political judgements on which that society is based. There is evidence that books and libraries are the chief bastion against the pressures toward conformity which are in large part overwhelming the motion picture, radio and television, and the press. Only in libraries can the interested citizens hope to find all the relevant facts concerning current controversial issues. It is appropriate that librarians should deem their freedom, and that of their libraries, of the utmost importance to the continued existence of democracy. (Author).

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GUIDELINES

for

INSURING INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

in

MISSOURI'S LIBRARIES

Prepared by the

MISSOURI LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
Intellectual Freedom Committee, 1968

Approved by membership, 1968
Supplement added and approved, 1969

LI 002 725

I. PREAMBLE

The following statement of policy was developed by the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Missouri Library Association as a means of carrying out its assigned responsibility "to make available such assistance and direction as deemed necessary and proper to any citizen of Missouri involved in a censorship incident."

This Association is directly concerned with the freedom of all members of a democratic society to read what they will in the course of making the social, educational, and political judgments on which that society is based. There is evidence that books and libraries are the chief bastion against the pressures toward conformity which are in large part overwhelming the motion picture, radio and television, and the press. Only in libraries can the interested citizens hope to find all the relevant facts concerning current controversial issues. It is appropriate that librarians should deem their freedom, and that of their libraries, of the utmost importance to the continued existance of democracy.

II. AUTHORITY

Through its Executive Board the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Missouri Library Association is empowered to act in all four areas of concern described below. These areas of concern constitute continuing responsibilities of the Committee until these GUIDELINES are amended or revoked.

III. AREAS OF CONCERN

1. The Association is concerned with watching for proposed legislation at the state, local, and school district level which might place library collections in jeopardy, or which might restrict, prejudice, or otherwise interfere with the selection, acquisition, or other professional activities of librarians.

   The Committee is instructed to write letters to and talk with legislators and administrators to present the Association's point of view and to appear before legislative and administrative committees in the interest of preserving freedom of the press and the right to read.

2. The Association is also concerned with legislation at the state, local, and school district level which tends to strengthen the position of libraries and other media of communication as instruments of knowledge and culture in a free society.

   The Committee is instructed to watch for legislation in the general field of the communication of knowledge and ideas which the Association might desirably support as being beneficial to the who concept embodied in the phrase "Freedom to Read." The Committee is instructed to inform the Association membership of such pending legislation, to present their recommendations, and to tender the Association's support to such legislation.

3. The Association is concerned with proposed or actual restrictions imposed by individuals, voluntary committees, or administrative authority on library materials or on the selection judgements, order procedures, or administrative practices of librarians.

   The Committee is instructed, upon request of either party to a controversy, to (a) determine the facts; (b) develop a statement of

policy; (c) present the Association's position to all interested parties, including the Press, when, in the Committee's judgment, this seems wise or necessary.

The Association believes that every library, in order to strengthen its own selection process, and to provide an objective basis for the evaluation of that process, should develop an official statement of policy for the selection of library materials based on the ALA BILL OF RIGHTS and SCHOOL LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS.

The Committee is instructed to collect existing selection policies from all types of libraries, to promote their development and official adoption by libraries not yet having them, and to develop sample prototypes of selection policies for the guidance of librarians writing such policies. *

IV. MECHANISM FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

The Missouri Library Association recommends the following steps for handling complaints about specific material which has been acquired by local libraries in accordance with the basic policy and selection procedures advocated above:

1. Ask complainant to fill out form detailing his objection to material. (Sample form attached hereto)
2. Refer complainant's form to a responsible professional library staff member or to staff-appointed committee for investigation and recommended action.
3. If material in question was acquired in accordance with Board's official policy and administration's formal selection procedure, defer to these in ruling on complaints, rather than attempting to argue merits of single item or type of material.
4. If necessary, ask for public hearing to present all sides to library governing body and to the public.
5. If incident becomes a public issue, make accurate and complete information available to all local news media.
6. If possible, enlist support of other local organizations known to foster intellectual freedom such as PTA, League of Women Voters, teachers' organization, etc.
7. Seek legal advice if available.
8. Report incident to Chairman, MLA Intellectual Freedom Committee for referral to ALA, ACLU, or individual legal representation if available. (Report form attached hereto)

* Sample prototypes of selection policies now available upon request from MLA IF Committee.

Sample Form

CITIZEN'S REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIAL

Author: Hardcover Paperback Other

Title:

Publisher (if known)

Request initiated by: _____

Telephone: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Complaint represents

_____himself

_____(name organization) _____

_____(identify other group) _____

(If objection is to material other than a book, change wording of the following questions so that they apply.)

1. To what in the book do you object? (Please be specific; cite pages.)

_____

_____

2. What do you feel might be the result of reading this book? _____

_____

3. For what age group would you recommend this book? _____

_____

4. Is there anything good about the book? _____

_____

5. Did you read the entire book? _____ What parts? _____

6. Are you aware of the judgment of this book by literary critics? _____

7. What do you believe is the theme of this book? _____

_____

8. What would you like your library/school to do about this book?

_____ do not assign/lend it to my child

_____ withdraw it from all readers/students as well as my child

_____ send it back to the staff selection official/English department office for re-evaluation.

9. In its place, what book of equal library quality would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of the subject treated?

_____

_____
Signature of Complainant

MLA/IF COMM., 1968

(Information given in this report will be treated as confidential. No action will be taken by MLA unless requested by the reporting official; special action (s) will be undertaken only with prior knowledge and approval of reporting official.)

TO: CHAIRMAN, INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE
MISSOURI LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
10 South Seventh Street
Columbia, Missouri 65201

FROM: _____
(Name, Title, Address, Telephone No. of Reporting Official)

DATE: _____

SUBJECT: Request for advice or assistance in meeting an attempt to restrict freedom of access to information in the _____
_____ Library, _____
(Address)

1. Date of incident: _____

2. Description of incident: (Use back of report form if more space is needed.)

_____

_____

3. Name, address, telephone no. of complainant/s: _____

_____

4. Has complainant filed statement listing his objections to material in question?
_____(Attach copy hereto if possible.)

5. Was material in question acquired in accordance with an officially adopted selection procedure?_____ Outline procedure: _____

_____

6. What local action has been taken?_____

_____

7. What is the position of the Library/School Board? _____

_____

8. Has legal advice been sought? _____Give name, address, telephone number of legal advisor: _____

9. Has incident been reported by local news media? _____ Attach clippings, if possible, or summarize coverage.

10. What kind of assistance, if any, is sought from MLA? _____

_____

11. Does MLA have the reporting official's permission to forward a summary of this incident to the national office of such organizations as ALA, NEA, and ACLU?
_____

MLA IF COMM.
1968

MISSOURI LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
10 South Seventh Street
Columbia, Missouri 65201

Supplement to Guidelines for Insuring Intellectual Freedom in Missouri's Libraries

(Unanimously approved at annual membership meeting, October 3, 1969)

RESOLVED:

That the MLA reaffirm its charge to the Intellectual Freedom Committee as adopted by membership vote on October 11, 1968.

Be it further resolved that to enable the Committee to carry out this charge more effectively, the following actions be taken:

1. The Executive Board will enter a subscription to the Missouri Press Association Clipping Service in the areas of intellectual freedom and censorship in Missouri Libraries for the use of the Intellectual Freedom Committee.

2. The Intellectual Freedom Committee will be directed to contact principals in incidents reported in the press or from other sources for the purpose of gathering information.

3. The Intellectual Freedom Committee will be directed to disseminate such information to the MLA membership by the most feasible means unless the principals object.

4. The Intellectual Freedom Committee will be directed to send such information as soon as possible to the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom and to inform those involved of resources available to them.

RESOLVED:

That the Missouri Library Association go on record as endorsing the establishment of the defense fund as outlined in the American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom proposal (ALA Bulletin, Sept. 1969) to be known as the Freedom to Read Foundation and that this action of MLA be forwarded to the Executive Board of ALA immediately.

Be if further resolved that MLA also endorse as an interim measure pending-ALA-action, the National Freedom Fund for Librarians.